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The American MUSIC LOVER

The Record Connoisseur's Magazine



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Edited by PETER HUGH REED

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Editorial Notes

The demand of the companies that the dealer return one old record for every three new ones purchased has placed a burden on a great many dealers from coast to coast. In the first place, buyers have shown great resentment and in many localities, according to the information that has come to us, dealers have not always been able to collect old discs from the buyer. Hence, in order to obtain his requisite purchases, the dealer has had to go out and buy up scrap discs for himself, often at a premium. This naturally cuts down the margin of his profit.

One or two readers write resentfully of the plan of one prominent Chicago dealer, who, if the buyer does not have old discs to turn in, requires him to pay a five-cent deposit on each new record bought with the understanding that a refund would be made upon his later presentation of old records (one old one for every three new ones bought).

We spoke about this procedure to dealers in Los Angeles, Boston and New York and found them completely in accord with the Chicago merchant's plan. "The buyer," said the Los Angeles dealer, "is inclined to take the stand that the Chicago dealer is perpetrating a racket, but this is untrue. What he actually is doing is protecting his own profits. The racket has been perpetrated elsewhere, and every dealer who has had to go out and procure

old discs for scrap to obtain his needed purchases of new records knows something about this; he is being held up for higher prices on all sides. It seems to me that the companies would do better by going out and collecting their own scrap instead of asking the dealer to do this. Some dealers have foolishly taken out old acoustic red seal records, undoubtedly long in stock, and turned them in for credit on new purchases. Many of the discs could have been sold, as indeed they are in the stores that deal in collectors' items, at prices ranging from 39c to over a dollar. The dealer is most anxious to cooperate with the record buyer, and he has a right to expect the record buyer to cooperate with him. Only by such cooperation can he fill the needs of his customers. If I were a person owning a lot of old records in my attic or cellar I wouldn't dispose of them for junk today, I'd go to see the nearest record dealer and give him the opportunity of purchasing them, or else go to friends who buy records regularly. When we consider that the English are paying close to two dollars for a good record today, it shouldn't be considered by American buyers a burden to have to pay five cents extra on each new record to contribute to the cause of scrap."

The views of our dealer-friend provide food for thought, and we are certain that

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a lot of people have not given the matter the same attention. The shortage of shellac may not be as acute as that of rubber, but if we are going to have records during

these difficult times we'll have to turn in old records, in much the same willing manner in which we have turned in old rubber.

RECORDS FOR OUR FIGHTING MEN

This is the name of another organization, news of whose formation we did not receive in time to mention it in our June issue along with our story of *Armed Forces Master Records*. Our plea to readers to get together a group of recordings for the latter organization has met with partial success; many readers have written to us of their willingness to cooperate. However, we would like everyone who can to contribute at least a record or two of classical music, or better still an album or two. If you failed to read in the June issue about the efforts of the *Armed Forces Master Records* to place record libraries of good music in the training bases of this country, let us know and we'll see that you get a copy of the story.

There is no question that our men in service want music — and the majority of the requests have been for good music. The following excerpt from a letter from a trainee in Kentucky is typical: "In civilian life, some of the pleasantest moments were spent in listening to my small collection of good recordings . . . Since I have been in the Army, I have tried to keep myself occupied with other activities, so that I would not keep thinking of my past life. So far I have been rather successful but there is no denying that I miss hearing good recordings very much . . . It would be perfect if there were a record library in camp, kept in a place where they could be listened to at any time."

Educators inform us that the type of music asked for by our fighting men today is quite the opposite of what the men of the last war asked for. It indicates, says Dean Alfred H. Meyer of the Boston University's School of Music, "that Americans are meeting war problems in a more restrained, wholesome manner than in 1917. The wild, brassy tunes of the

last war and the post-war period revealed the confusion and unrest in the minds of people. Today, the preference is for finer, gentler melodies."

Records for Our Fighting Men, Inc. is an organization formed by a group of prominent musicians of the concert, operatic and jazz worlds. Its purpose is to collect old records, convert them into scrap, and with the proceeds buy new records for our armed forces. It has been promised the cooperation of the American Legion, assisted by the American Legion Auxiliary, in the launching of a house-to-house canvass from coast to coast to be held beginning July 20 through August 2. The goal is to collect 25,000,000 old records. With the funds provided from the sale of this scrap, conservatively estimated at a half-million dollars, this organization intends to supply new records for the libraries of all the fighting forces in the camps.

Prominent among those who have campaigned for *Records for Our Fighting Men* by sending out letters are Kay Kyser and Kate Smith. The organization has the wholehearted cooperation of the Columbia Recording Corporation, practically all of whose leading artists are listed on its committee.

Through the efforts of *Armed Forces Master Records* and *Records for Our Fighting Men*, the boys who are serving our country should in a short time have plenty of recordings available in the camps to hear at any time they wish.

Armed Forces Master Records has been working for some weeks and reports that to date it has been able to assemble 35 library units, each containing 100 selected records of good music. The group behind this are donating their services free of charge.

MUSIC

AFTER BATTLES

In April, 1941, we carried a story entitled *Music On the High Seas* by a Lieutenant Commander in the United States Navy, who was a subscriber to the magazine. In it he told us about his library of records, his musical preferences and his equipment, and also what music meant to him. On board the American destroyer he commanded he had a Magnavox Symphony-model machine and a collection of records numbering 50 albums as well as a group of single discs. One of the most interesting paragraphs in his story was that dealing with music on the high seas. He said: "Among the requirements of a satisfactory phonograph for a ship of this kind is that it be strong enough to stand the shock of your own gunfire, otherwise it might be wrecked at the first target practice — to say nothing of what would happen in battle. Salt spray corrosion is also present, not to mention that everything must be bolted to the deck for security in rough weather."

We have recently heard from this officer, who has been promoted to the rank of Commander, and because of distinguished service in the Battle of the Java Seas and other engagements in Eastern waters, has been decorated by the U. S. Government. For obvious reasons his name must be withheld, but his experiences as a fighting man and as music lover will no doubt be of interest to our readers.

Stationed in Manilla at the opening of the war, he had moved his phonograph and most of his record collection to his hotel room. When war broke out on December 7, his duties did not allow him time to return his machine and recordings to his ship. They had to be left in the care of a friend, and what has happened to them since he can imagine, although

he has no information to substantiate his conjectures.

"The impact of war on people," he says, "is a remarkable thing, and while I have had three months of the most intimate acquaintance with it in the Java Seas and elsewhere I do not pretend to know the answers. However, I can mention certain phases of it with which I am familiar and which may be of interest to your readers.

"There sometimes is a definite feeling that the war is a given reality that will admit of no thought or feeling until its completion. There is the most intense concentration on the objectives and problems of the moment, which are literally life and death. As one's responsibilities are increased by rank or circumstances, so is the degree of concentration. The manner in which the war came upon us did much to intensify this, for not matter how certain any of us was that war was inevitable, no one dreamed that we would be caught so flat-footed. With the outbreak of war all thoughts of music and its associated human values were driven from the mind. The stark power of the opposite human values, with which we were dealing, dominated. But, as in all wars, time came when the mind had reached the saturation point in the consideration of immediate problems, or the problems for the moment became static. Then it was that thoughts and memories of music would sometimes come in, sometimes with deep nostalgia, sometimes with a sense of almost overwhelming bitterness that the human race, which was capable of such heights of individual and cooperative greatness and expression of beauty, could and must be capable of savage and unrelenting warfare. For there is only one kind of war, and there is no choice in the present state of human evolution. It is

only the savage and unrelenting persecution of war or slavery. If we are not tough-minded enough to realize that, we do not deserve to survive.

"Although I regretted leaving my records and machine in Manila, I knew later that they would not have survived the battles in which my ship took part. But the need for music came over me again and again, as indeed it does will all people who find comfort and spiritual sustenance in its power in times of peace. Perhaps nothing proved this more conclusively than an experience I had in the Dutch East Indies town of Surabaya. From time to time during February I was able to go to the Simpang Club in Surabaya for dinner. I was always tired and greatly concerned. Once it was after a particularly hard fight with a group of Japanese ships, a battle that had lasted for many hours. I was still rather deaf from shell fire and had not slept for 48 hours. With me was the skipper of another of our destroyers; both of us had tried to sleep but could not, so a bit of relaxation and a meal ashore seemed the answer. Near us sat the Dutch Admiral who had been in command during the previous night's engagement, which had resulted in considerable damage to the Japanese. We all chatted a bit, then we went on in to dinner. The radio was playing an excellent recording of an unfamiliar symphony — which I later identified as Mahler's *Ninth*. It was most interesting to watch the faces of the men and women around us: so few showed any expression other than that of grave interest; they were unmistakably in the power of the music. Suddenly, the music was interrupted by a news broadcast. The assembled diners immediately became restless, but once the news stopped and the symphony took up again the crowd listened quietly and apparently with the deepest interest until its conclusion.

"It would be difficult for me to put into words just what that music did for me, or what it meant to me. We finished our dinner in silence and drove back to our dock to go aboard our ships. There I found the men sprawled out in exhausted sleep as we picked our way over the dark-

ened decks. I went below and finally got to sleep in the usual pool of perspiration, only to be awakened by the 6:30 air alarm as the first Japanese planes came over to reconnoiter.

"Within ten days I had fought two more battles; the Japanese had taken the city; the Dutch Admiral and my friend were missing in action. Now, as the expression goes, I am living on borrowed time. Perhaps this summer I can hear some good music — it will help, not so much to efface bitter memories or the grim reality of war but to ease a turbulence of spirit. Often I wonder what has happened to the charming and cultivated people whom I met in Manila last December; people who knew, loved and played the grand and beautiful music that belongs to the human race. Many of them had come to Manila to escape Nazi tyranny. There they had hoped to find peace and opportunity to work under the protection of our flag . . . As a fighting man I know only one thing — that nothing but bitter, bloody fighting will win this war, and as a fighter I am ready to do my part, but in the times between those of stress and strain I want some music."

OVERTONE

Shostakovich's *Seventh Symphony* will be given its first performance in this country on Sunday, July 19 (4:15 to 6:00 p.m., EWT), over the NBC network by the NBC Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Arturo Toscanini. The entire program will also be shortwaved to the rest of the world by NBC.

After a series of international negotiations, which included the flying of 35-millimeter microfilm prints of the Shostakovich score and parts from Kuibyshev on April 9 to Teheran, Iran, an automobile trip to Cairo and another plane trip from there to the U.S.A., NBC arranged with Toscanini to give this symphony its first performance in the Western hemisphere. The *Seventh Symphony*, lasting approximately ninety minutes, is in four movements. It is rumored that the Italian maestro may also record the symphony for Victor.

TECHNICAL NOTES

HOW WE STAND

ROBERT S. LANIER

This department, in the three years of its existence, has found abundant material in the challenge of a commercial sound-reproduction technique that has many imperfections, but at the same time offers components and methods, which, if combined properly, can effect very great improvement in the total result. The experimenter's expectations are also kept very much alive by the continuing appearance of new, improved equipment on the market, a process that carries with it great promise for the future.

The greatest promise of all, the one that makes an interest in sound-reproduction technique so phenomenally wide-spread, is that some day music reproduced in the home will have the clarity, the power, the complete freedom from distortion and noise, and the convenience, which it seems always just on the point of achieving, but never quite realizes. This promise has been implicit in the phonograph since its invention sixty-five years ago, and each time some radical improvement in technique has been made by the phonograph industry, the industry has been led by a mixture of pardonable hope with commercial urgency, to announce the arrival of "perfection", the achievement of the ultimate, the final delivery of music into the hands of the listener. It is amusing and sobering to read the phonograph advertising of 1888, of 1901, of 1906, of 1911, of 1926, etc., etc., all dates on which some such change in technique was hailed as bringing full mastery of the instrument at last.

Through its marriage with electricity, which took place in 1926, the phonograph has of course, come very far. It has made fine music so universally available, so amenable to the wish of the individual listener, that the fundamental relationship

between composer and listener is bound to be affected. The fact that anyone and everyone can have any music, no matter how rare, at any time, for repetition as often as desired, is a reversal of the basic conditions under which the serious music of modern civilization was created.

The outcome of this esthetic revolution is impossible to foresee, but the fact the phonograph could share with the radio major responsibility for setting it in motion, is a measure of how close the phonograph has come to technical mastery. It is closest to success in the knowledge and experience of the engineers, who can now lay down the most detailed specifications for something that sounds very much like perfection — and, what is more, can build according to those specifications if called on to do so. It is exasperatingly removed from this ideal in its commercial aspect, in the instruments and records which are currently and widely available at reasonable prices to all, the area in which the final success of the phonograph must come if it is to achieve the real greatness of its promise.

This gap is one that only the phonograph industry itself can close, or even materially reduce. While it exists, however, the music lover can do much as an intelligent amateur to bridge it, by utilizing the best components and techniques available to him. This may mean the employment of a thoroughly qualified technician to build a complete reproducer from scratch, or it may mean only the substitution of a better pickup, or a new loudspeaker, for the one included on a commercially produced machine. The writer has tried to give accurate and practical advice on all such matters, and to evaluate for the reader the many new components and systems that have ap-

peared on the market in the last several years, so that intelligent choices could be made.

Now that the war has temporarily closed off the stream of new instruments and techniques, it should be worthwhile to look around and see where we are, and where we should go from here when the lid is off again.

First, as to amplifiers, it should be said that amplifier technique is now equal to anything that is required of it. It is here that the gap between the ideal and the actual is nearest closing. A really fine amplifier is still expensive, and it is still impossible to buy a complete commercially constructed outfit with all desirable features. But proper constructional methods are becoming better and better known, so that competent technicians who keep up with the technical literature should now or in the near future have no trouble in constructing an amplifier of the very highest quality.

Some of the typical specifications of a high grade amplifier for reproduction of records in the home are the following: (a) resistance-coupled low-level stages, designed emphatically for low distortion and wide frequency range, rather than maximum gain per stage. This means in general the use of low gain triode tubes; (b) a very flexible tone-control system, allowing for cut or boost of high or low frequencies, and not introducing distortion at any setting. Many systems of cutting highs, for instance, upset the circuit involved very seriously and cause terrific distortion; (c) manually adjustable low-pass-filter, for cutting the highs off sharply at various levels, such as 5000, 6000, 8000, and 10,000 cycles; (d) a resistance-coupled phase-inverter, of the self-balancing type which has been initially balanced by a technician with the proper instruments; (e) a push-pull driver stage, transformer-coupled to a push-pull triode output stage, using fixed bias and transformers of extremely high quality.

The components and methods for building such an amplifier have been readily available, and if scarce now, will be on hand in quantity once the war is over.

There are two points at which the man-

ufacturers could give us some real help, however. One is with the low-pass filter. None which is really designed for the home phonograph is now on the market. Most of the available designs, too, from which such filters could be built by a technician, are intended for use with broadcast transmitting equipment. The writer's correspondence, as well as many published articles, prove that there is an increasing demand for a simple design that will fit into an amplifier of the kind described above. Let us hope that one of the first things we get after the war is a convenient and inexpensive low-pass filter design.

The other point has to do with the output tubes available. A push-pull triode output stage, in a home phonograph, now means inevitably the 2A3 tube. A pair of 2A3's makes a fine output stage, but the power available, about 12 watts, is a little too low for reproduction of the very highest quality. Even though the average power required in a medium sized living room is one to three watts, it has been abundantly proved that a power reserve of about ten to one is necessary to take care of the peaks in symphonic music, and to keep distortion at a minimum. A triode stage with 30-watt capability is indicated for really clean reproduction, and this takes us to such transmitting triodes as the Western Electric 300-A, which is very difficult for the experimenter to get.

If the tube manufacturers could make a triode like the WE 300-A readily available for custom-built amplifiers, it would solve this problem neatly, and remove the last objection to the triode output stage. An outfit of the type described, in which every detail of design is carefully aimed at low distortion and wide frequency range, with triodes for 30 watts of strictly Class A output would settle the question of power for living-room reproduction with satisfying finality.

Loudspeakers of satisfactory quality are — or were until the war — available. Multiple speakers now appear definitely desirable, and the writer expects to see systems with three or more speakers become standard for high-quality reproduction. We could use a moderately priced speaker designed specifically for the very low bass,

say from 30 cycles up to about 200. All of the present speakers that the home constructor can buy cover a much wider frequency range and since it is impossible to reproduce the very low bass and the mid-treble with the same speaker, the bottom of the bass range usually gets left out. In general, the larger and heavier the speaker, the better it will do in the very low bass, so that the best practice at the present time is to use a very large speaker, 15 to 18 inches, with high power capability and good design, as a "woofer", a smaller speaker of high quality to cover the middle range, and a "tweeter", for the highs. A set-up like this required a dividing network designed by an engineer who knows what he is doing, and it requires a competent technician to get it phased and balanced properly. Otherwise it will generate confusion and distortion rather than clarity and power.

The amateur can improve his reproducer more directly and easily with a home-built loudspeaker baffle than in any other one way. Not only the tonal quality but the appearance of the usual commercial cabinet can be very readily improved by the music lover who is handy with carpenters' tools. The opportunity this offers for adapting the phonograph to interior decoration schemes is also very attractive. Only a few simple rules need be followed: (1) the box should be very strongly made and braced to prevent any vibration; (2) it should completely enclose the back of the speaker, and be lined with sound-

absorbing material such as ozite or rock wool; (3) the enclosed volume of air must be large enough to give good bass response, not less than eight to ten cubic feet for a twelve-inch speaker, and better if more. If these rules are followed, the baffle can have any shape the ingenuity of the constructor can devise. A very useful shape, when the loudspeaker mounting must be as inconspicuous as possible, is a tall column of triangular cross-section which can be shoved into a corner of the living room — the corner is, incidentally, the most efficient position for the speaker in the room.

The present state of the pickup leaves much to be desired. Several promising developments have been postponed by the war, and meanwhile the solution of the pickup problem, for it is a real problem, hangs very much on certain refinements and changes in the records themselves. This interlocking chain of improvements will scarcely become commercially available until after the war, but it is extremely useful, meanwhile, to discuss the question, and to find just what the engineers can do, or think is necessary to do, in order to make the record-pickup combination come fully up to the quality of the amplifier and loudspeaker.

In this connection, several of the papers presented at the recent meeting of the Acoustical Society of America are very pertinent. These papers, and the whole pickup problem, will be discussed in the next article.

VICTOR'S CUT-OUT LIST (MAY 1942)

Since a number of readers have written us that their dealers do not have copies of Victor's cut-out list and have asked that we publish it, we are complying with their requests. We have arranged the list alphabetically according to composers, and have placed asterisks on those recommended by our staff of reviewers.

BACH: Toccatas in C minor and D major

(Schnabel) (set 532)*; *Capriccio in B flat* (K. U. Schnabel) (discs 4293/94); *Brandenburg Concerto No. 2* and *Passacaglia in C minor* (Stokowski) (set 59); **BACH** (arr. Goossens): *Suite in G* (Goossens) (disc 11427).

BALAKIREFF: Thamar (Coppola) (discs 11349/50).

BEETHOVEN: *Romance in G major* (Spalding) (disc 1788); *Symphony No. 7* (Stokowski) (set 17); *Sonata in E flat, Op. 12, No. 3* (Busch and Serkin) (discs 7560/61); *Archduke Trio, Op. 97* (Thibaud, Casals, Cortot) (set 92)*; *Quartet in F minor, Opus 95* (Busch Qt.) (discs 8252/53); *Quartet in F major, Op. 18, No. 1* (Busch Quartet) (set 206); *Quartet in C major, Op. 59, No. 1* (Busch Qt.) (set 171); *Spring Sonata, Op. 24* (Buskin and Serkin) (set 228); *Symphony No. 4* (Ormandy) (set 274); *Cello Sonata in G minor, Op. 5, No. 2* (Schnabel and Piatigorsky) (set 283)*; *Quartet in D major, Op. 18, No. 3* (Budapest Qt.) (set 289)*.

BEREZOWSKI: *Quartet No. 1* (Coolidge Qt.) (set 624).

BLOCH: *Quintet* (Casella and Pro Arte Qt.) (set 191)*; *Violin Sonata* (Ginold and Rubinstein) (set 498)*.

BORODIN: *Quartet No. 2 in D* (Pro Arte Qt.) (set 255)*.

BRAHMS: *Symphony No. 3* (Stokowski) (set 42); *Symphony No. 2* (Stokowski) (set 82); *Symphony No. 4* (Stokowski) (set 185); *Sonata in G major, Op. 78* (Busch and Serkin) (discs 7560/61)*; *Concerto No. 1 in D minor* (Bachaus) (set 209)*; *Die Mainacht, Seligkeit; Rastlose Liebe* (Ria Ginster) (disc 7821)*; *Piano Music* (Bachaus) (set 202); *Sonata in D minor, Op. 121* (Kochanski and Rubinstein) (set 241); *Quartet No. 2 in A minor, Op. 51, No. 2* (Budapest Qt.) (set 278)*; *Piano Quartet in A major, Op. 26* (Serkin, Busch, etc.) (set 346)*; *Sonata in A major, Op. 100* (Spalding) (set 288).

CHOPIN: *Sonata in B flat minor* (Rachmaninoff) (set 95)*; *Rondo, Op. 73* (K. U. Schnabel and L. Shute) (disc 11616); *Waltzes* (Cortot) (set 500)*.

CHAUSSON: *Symphony in B flat* (Copola) (set 261)*.

DEBUSSY: *Pelleas et Melisande — Excerpts* (Panzera, Brothier, Marcoux, etc.) (set 68)*; *Preludes, Book I* (Cortot) (set 480).

DOHNANYI: *Suite* (Stock) (set 47).

DVORAK: *Piano Quintet, Op. 81* (Schnabel and Pro Arte Qt.) (set 219)*.

DUKAS: *Variations on a Theme by Ram-* eau (Lefebure) (set 385)*.

FALLA, de: *José*; and **OBRADORA:** *Consejo* (Bori) (disc 1978).

FAURE: *Quartet, Op. 120* (Pro Arte Qt.) (set 372)*.

FRANCK: *Sonata in A* (Spalding and Benoist) (set 208); *Quintet in F minor* (Cortot and International Qt.) (set 38).

FRENCH PIANO MUSIC (Emma Boy- net) (set 549).

HANDEL: *Alcina Suite* (Mengelberg) (discs 1435/36); *Concerto in B flat, Op. 4, No. 6* (Roesgen-Champion) (discs 4363/64).

HARRIS: *Chorale* (Kreiner Sextet) (disc 12537)*.

D'INDY: *Suite* (Paris Quintet) (discs 11668/69)*.

LEMBRECKE: *Mailied*; and **STRAUSS:** *Traum durch die Dämmerung* (Melchior) (disc 1980).

LEKEU: *Sonata in G* (Menuhins) (set 579).

MALIPIERO: *Rispetti e Strambotti* (Kreiner Qt.) (set 397)*.

MEDTNER: *12 Piano Pieces* (Medtner) (set 384)*.

MENDELSSOHN: *Quartet No. 1 in E flat* (Budapest Qt.) (set 307)*; *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage Overture* (Blech) (disc 11452); *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Hertz) (set 18).

MOZART: *Quartet in G, K. 80* (Kreiner Qt.) (set 393); *Quartet in D minor, K. 421* (Flonzaley Qt.) (discs 7607/08); *Piano Quartet in G minor, K. 478* (Schnabel and Pro Arte Qt.) (set 251)*; *Quartet in D major, K. 499* (Budapest Qt.) (set 222)*; *Quartet in B flat, K. 589* (set 407); *Quintet in E flat, K. 452* (Taffanel Instrumental Ensemble) (set 137); *Sextet in F, K. 522* (Kolisch) (set 432)*; *Seraglio — Martern aller Arten, and, Figaro — Voi che sapete* (Ria Ginster) (disc 7822); *Sonata in B flat for bassoon and cello* (Shuster and Kohon) (disc 12149).

REYER: *Arias from Sigurd* (Marjorie Lawrence) (disc 15892).

RIETI: *Quartet in F major* (Pro Arte Qt.) (discs 1821/22).

ROSSI: *Toccata in G major*; and **PAS-QUINI:** *Toccata* (Nino Rossi) (disc 15893).

SAINT-SAENS: *Phaeton* (Coppola) (disc 11431).

SCARLATTI, A.: *Sonata for Flute and Strings* (Paris Quintet) (discs 4250/51)*.

SCHUBERT: *Trio in B flat* (Pasquier Trio) (set 435)*; *Frueblingstraum* and *Gretchen am Spinnrade* (Hertha Glatz) (disc 15247); *Sonata in A major, Op. 162* (Kreisler and Rachmaninoff) (set 107)*.

SCHUMANN: *Carnaval* (Rachmaninoff) (set 70)*; *Quintet in E flat, Op. 44* (Schnabel and Pro Arte Qt. (set 267).*

SIBELIUS: *Symphony No. 1* (Ormandy and Minneapolis Sym.) (set 290).

SPANISH PIANO MUSIC (George Copeland) (set 178).

STRAUSS, R.: *Schlechtes Wetter; Staendchen; All mein Gedanken; Hat gesagt, bleibt's nicht dabei* (Elizabeth Schu-

mann) (disc 7707)*; *Sonata in E flat* (Heifetz and Bey) (set 200); *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (Krauss and Vienna Phil. Orch.) (set 101).

TANSMAN: *Triptych for Strings* (Curtis Ensemble) (disc 11944/45)*.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Francesca da Rimini* (Coates) (discs 11091/92).

WAGNER: *Elisabeths Gebet, and Elsa's Traum* (Jeritza) (disc 6694).

WAGNER: *Meistersinger — Prelude; Rhine Journey; Siegfried's Funeral March; Parsifal — Prelude* (Karl Muck) (set 37); *Traume, and Schmerzen* (Frieda Leider) (disc 7708)*; *Tristan und Isolde — Act 3* (Ljungberg, Coates etc.) (set 41).

WEBER: *Adagio and Rondo*; and FRANCOEUR: *Largo and Vivo* (Piatigorsky) (disc 8995); *Der Freischuetz — Overture* (Hertz) (disc 6705).

OVERTONES

To us the most exciting news from England is the advent at long last on records of Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad Rhapsody*, a work written by a young man who was killed in the last war. It is performed by Sir Adrian Boult, to whom we urged the desirability of this recording some time ago. The disc number is C3287 (H.M.V.). It is to be hoped that Victor will release this charming musical pastoreale by a highly talented English composer in the near future. Other English releases this month include:

BORODIN: *Prince Igor — Overture*; and TCHAIKOVSKY: *Sleeping Beauty — Waltz*; Hallé Orchestra, dir. Heward. Col. DX1078/79.

BEETHOVEN: *Trio in E flat, Op. 70, No. 2*; Grinke, Hooten, and Taylor. Decca K1069/71.

CHOPIN: *Impromptu in A flat, Op. 29; Waltz in C sharp minor, Op. 64, No. 2*; Louis Kentner. Columbia DX1081.

RACHMANINOFF: *Preludes Nos. 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11*; Moura Lympny. Decca K1027.

MOZART: *La Finta Giardiniera — A Maiden's Is an Evil Plight*; and HANDEL: *Solomon — With Thee the Unsheltered Moor*; sung by Isobel Baillie with orch. Col. DX1080.

KENNEDY-FRASER: *Songs of the Hebrides — Aillte; The Wild Swan; The Mull Fisher's Love Song; The Isle Reaper's Song*; Astra Desmond (contralto) with Maria Korchinska (harp). Decca K977.

Rumor has it that the Budapest Quartet has recorded Beethoven's quartets Opus 18, No. 4; Opus 59, No. 3; Opus 95; Opus 125; and Opus 132; also the Mozart *Quintet in G minor*. We are given to understand that Schnabel recently had a recording session in which he made more Schubert sonatas as well as two Beethoven sonatas he originally played for the society sets numbers one and two.



RECORD' NOTES AND

REVIEWS

It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the readers is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.

We believe that record buyers would do well to order by title rather than by number such items as they may wish to purchase. Numbers are sometimes printed incorrectly in our sources.

Jerome Pastene, who contributes a review this month, is a Boston reviewer. He is at present writing a book on Johann Strauss.

All prices given are without tax.

Orchestra

BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 8 in F major, Op. 93; played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, direction of Arturo Toscanini. Victor set DM-908, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Perhaps no music that Beethoven wrote presents a greater sense of well-being than his *Eighth Symphony*. One can hardly listen to it and not feel grateful that one is alive and able to hear such an affirmation of a great man's creative elation. A lot of ink has been wasted en-

deavoring to explain this work, but most of the ears that hear and appreciate its jovial and exuberant qualities hardly ask the eyes, to pay heed to unnecessary explanations. It was underestimated when it was first performed, a fact that disconcerted the composer least of all. "It's because the work's so much better," he said. So much better than what, we ask, for Beethoven could hardly mean it was so much better than its predecessor or than any of the other great symphonies that came before. So much better than the *Sixth*, the *Fourth*, and the *Second*, perhaps — those even-numbered works which are not infrequently spoken of as the composer's moderated moments. But the *Eighth Symphony* is neither a parallel nor a counterpart of the other even-numbered ones, it stands quite alone and apart from all the other symphonies put together. Some writers contend it is not only the most concise but the most untrammeled of all nine.

This is a work for which Toscanini has a particular flair. His apprehension of its every mood is effectually realized at every turn of the music. The unbending objectivity of the score, its lightheartedness, its exaltation, its songful moods, and above all its boisterous mirth — which makes its final movement one of the greatest joys that Beethoven ever gave us — are splendidly substantiated. The text-

ural transparency, the subtle shading and the firm contours of the playing — hallmarks of the great conductor's inspired musicianship—make this the best version of the symphony on records. This, despite the fact that the recording was obviously made during a broadcast, for the cut-off in the middle of the movements is abrupt, and despite the fact that the tone in loud passages is somewhat constricted and definitely lacking in the richness of sonority that has been apparent in the more recent recordings with the NBC Symphony Orchestra made by the conductor. Undoubtedly this recording was procured from the studio in which the orchestra plays for broadcasting. But as a studio recording, it seems to me to be slightly better than some of those that came before.

—P. H. R.

BRAHMS: *Hungarian Dances Nos. 1, 2 and 7*; played by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Fabien Sevitzky. Victor disc 11-8223, price \$1.00.

▲ This is, as far as we have been able to trace, the first recording of both the second and seventh dances in the orchestral arrangements made by the composer. The first has been previously recorded by Stokowski and Furtwaengler.

Sevitzky does not achieve the variety of nuance and rhythm that his predecessors attained in the first dance. Indeed, his performance of all three is accomplished in a rather uncompromisingly straightforward manner. The recording, however, is excellent.

Some day, it is to be hoped, recordings of the Brahms *Hungarian Dances* will be made by a conductor who has the imagination and insight into the subtleties of their tonal and rhythmic patterns which Talich evidences in his performances of Dvorak's *Slavonic Dances*.

—P. G.

KERN: *Show Boat* — Scenario for Orchestra; played by Janssen Symphony of Los Angeles, conducted by Werner Janssen. Victor set DM-906, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ There is an over-all brightness to the

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reproduction here which is not apparent in the Columbia set played under the same prevailing conditions. But Janssen's rendition of the score does not offer the careful treatment which Rodzinski gives it. Janssen produces smooth playing and frequently more volatility in the quicker passages, but not the same precision of attack or outline, or the same considerate attention to detail and phrasing which Rodzinski shows. It can be argued that by no stretch of the imagination is this a real symphonic score, for the musical substance is not of symphonic calibre nor is it treated in that manner. But it was Rodzinski's admiration for the music of *Show Boat* that caused him to suggest to Kern the arrangement of this score, and one feels that Rodzinski lavished more time and care in shaping his performance. The style of Janssen's performance is undeniably cogent for the material under hand, and certainly the reproduction he

has been favored with is excellently accomplished. Thus the decision of the record buyer will rest upon whether he thinks the music warrants the more refined treatment that Rodzinski gives it or whether the more lively and less subtle exposition of Janssen with its brighter colors suffices. Having heard Rodzinski play the music in concert our choice goes to his version.

The rumors of the splendid quality of the Janssen Symphony which have been coming to us in the past year are assuredly substantiated by the playing of the orchestra here. It is regrettable, however, that at a time like this, the Janssen Symphony had to be introduced on records by a score of this kind. Many readers and dealers have written us suggesting that the issuance of unessential duplications should be terminated while the production of records remains curtailed. However, what one may consider an unessential duplication another may regard as needed, and we suspect that this recording may prove that contention.

—P. H. R.

MOZART: *Symphony in D major, K. 504 (The Prague)*; played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia set M or MM-509, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ This issue had not arrived for review at the time of going to press. But it was our good fortune to have heard it earlier in the home of an English friend who had imported the set. Both Stock and Walter have previously recorded the work, but Beecham's reading instantly appealed to us for its fine-grained texture, the subtler orchestral coloring and its compassion. Beecham does not seem to employ quite as large an orchestra as Stock or Walter, but no true Mozartean could possibly resent this. We feel that no better review of this set could be presented than that written by our friend, W. R. Anderson, when the set appeared in England in December, 1940. It is reprinted here by kind permission of *The Gramophone*, in which it was published.

"A performance of quiet strength and the finest feeling, which satisfies me fully.

"The work was first heard at Prague in

1787, when *Figaro* was all the rage, Mozart found the Praguers 'flying about with such delight to the music of my *Figaro*, transformed into quadrilles and waltzes.' Not *Figaro*, but *Giovanni* (later), is the thought (in spite of the thematic resemblance in bars 5 and 6): the prelude (usual with Mozart), spacious, leisurely, solemn, with its minor key second element, makes it a little difficult to break off at the *Allegro* and take quite another line of feeling. Exposition and development (the latter highly contrapuntal) are on side 2. The weaving develops from the opening of the *Allegro*, from the violin figure in bars 5-7, and from the octave wind figure (not very clearly heard here), which begins with the leap upward, immediately following this. Some development has begun even before the second subject, which is a song-like pendant, appears (just over one third of the way in). It is not the only kind Mozart offers, and it is certainly not the most immediately attractive, for some. Its tremendous concentration of technique and thought puts it on one of the highest pinnacles of art.

"This slow movement is scored for the small orchestra of strings and wind only (the only brass being the two horns; the work has no clarinets). The wind sounds a trifle small, but the delicacy is vital. I remember Mr. Grew's remarking on the difference between this exquisite 6-8 motion and the sort of lazy, even smarmy 6-8 we have been smothered with for the last hundred years, in so many salon pieces, organ pastorales, and the like, down to sentimental songs. The sentiment here is at once open and reserved: the more reserved, I feel, at the minor key episode: yet there is a poignant undercurrent here, different from the sensibility of the movement's opening, which itself is sufficiently keen for the heart of anyone who thinks of music as it is and as it was a century and a half ago.

"This movement is one of the vital documents for any lover of Mozart, who wants to find the man behind the music. Beecham and his players touch its beauty with the most affectionate fingers.

"The finale will be found to provide the most remarkable mixture of lightness

and force: the major-minor alterations, which pervade the whole work, exhibit the outward elements of the perfect athlete. . . ; within is the inward nervous power that moves all. Beecham has not striven for any great production of tone. That the Mozart-lover will understand and appreciate. Some might like rather more; but coming from the great weight — rightly used — of the Rachmaninoff [Anderson refers to the Rachmaninoff-Ormandy performance of the pianist's Third Concerto, reviewed in the same issue of *The Gramophone*], the smaller orchestra and restrained volume of the Mozart is intensely refreshing, in its own world of power, to which it is always a joy to attune ourselves." —W. R. A

RAVEL: *Le Tombeau de Couperin*; played by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, direction of Dimitri Mitropoulos. Columbia set X or MX-222, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.00.

▲ Ravel began this music in the summer of 1914 and completed it three years later. It was originally written for piano in six movements; the composer published four of the sections, in 1919, as an orchestral suite. Since each of the pieces is dedicated to the memory of a friend who died in defense of France a quarter of a century ago, the suite may justly be called a souvenir of World War I. It is also a

gesture of homage to Couperin Le Grand, court musician to Louis XIV, for each section is written in an 18th-century dance form favored by him.

George Dyson has termed Debussy and Ravel the true disciples of Couperin and Rameau. It is an opinion that not all writers share. Gray contends that when Ravel endeavors to be most French, as in this suite, he is uninspired. Yet, as Dyson says, both Debussy and Ravel, by confirming themselves to small proportions, were able to fashion their new ideas into a consistent if restricted whole. Although the pattern of the dances Couperin wrote with such facile fluency for the harpsichord is followed in this suite, there is not the same essence of charm in Ravel's movements. There is a touch of irony, a bitterness that suggests the composer was aiming at a mordant archaic idiom. The pieces are perhaps inseparable from the spirit of the war in which Ravel as well as his lost friends participated.

Mitropoulos gives this music a distinguished performance; in fact, he succeeds in making it more interesting to listen to than anyone else I have heard conduct it. Part of the success of his performance is no doubt due to the excellence of the reproduction, in which textural transparency and tonal nuance are preserved. This recording displaces an earlier one made by Piero Coppolo. —P. H. R.

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SCRIABIN: (arr. LaSalle Spier): *Two Etudes*; played by the National Symphony Orchestra, direction of Hans Kindler. Victor disc 11-8150, price \$1.00.

▲ The études are numbers 1 and 2 from Opus 2; the first is in C sharp minor and the second in F sharp minor. Both suggest the influence of Chopin and Rachmaninoff. Muriel Kerr once made a recording for Victor of the *C sharp minor Etude* and more recently Columbia released a version by Anatole Kitain. The *F sharp minor Etude* has never been previously in the catalogue of either company.

There seems to be no real justification for orchestrating this music, much less playing such arrangements in a recording. One recalls the inflations of Chopin pieces which Stokowski has done. The first étude becomes, if anything, more saccharine in orchestral dress, and the second — which is written in the broadly free and rhapsodic style of some of the composer's later works — is unduly inflated, a factor we suspect for which the conductor can be blamed as much as the arranger. The recording is first-rate.

—P. G.

STRAUSS (Johann, II): *Treasure Waltzes*; from *The Gypsy Baron*; played by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, direction of Fritz Reiner. Columbia disc 11800-D, price \$1.00.

▲ The very attributes which made Reiner's recording of *Wiener Blut* the superlative performance which it is react here to the detriment of this set of waltzes. For the exaggerated *rubato* which so suited the languorous rhythms of *Wiener Blut*, a set of waltzes conceived in terms of the concert-hall, are not compatible with the rhythms of the *Schatz Waltzer*, drawn from Strauss's opera, *Der Zigeunerbaron*.

Wiener Blut, originally written for Herbeck and the Vienna Men's Choral Association, was not intended for the dance floor. Therefore, this waltz permits — even demands — an amount of *rubato* which is completely out of place in those waltzes which Strauss wrote for the dance-

hall. The *Schatz Waltzer*, drawn from passages in the *Gypsy Baron*, and arranged by Strauss to fill the program of an Imperial Ball, was one of the latter. Any attempt to apply the *rubato* of a *Wiener Blut* to this set of waltzes will inevitably result in a distortion of its melodic line.

There is a constant straining for effect here; the slow opening of each waltz section becomes tedious, and the listener has an inner desire to push the music along. I would infinitely prefer the very old version by Leo Blech and the Berlin State Opera Orchestra (V. 9991), in which the music is allowed to breathe freely and naturally. Unfortunately, the reverse is true when one compares the recording techniques accorded these two discs. Reiner enjoys recording that is a good example of the best in American Columbia's technique, whereas Blech's disc is shrill and often distorted, and the surfaces extremely scratchy. Choice, therefore, devolves upon the individual listener, depending on whether he prefers a performance of undisputed authenticity, which is rendered fairly inaudible by inferior recording, or a performance that is scarcely routine, in which the conductor shows little understanding of the music, but which is clearly and smoothly reproduced.

— Jerome Pastene

STRAUSS, Johann: *Songs of Love Waltz*, Op. 114 (disc 11-8215); *Morning Papers Waltz*, Op. 279 (disc 11-8216); *You and You Waltz* from *The Bat* (disc 11-8217); played by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of Clemens Kraus. Victor set DM-907, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ This set had not arrived at the time of going to press. Mr. Pastene will review it next month.

Concerto

GRIEG: *Concerto in A Minor, Opus 16*; played by Artur Rubinstein (piano) and the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Eugene Ormandy. Victor set DM-900, three discs, price \$3.50

▲ The poetic spirit of Grieg belonged

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definitely in the world of song. His piano concerto, although undeniably one of his best works, strives for heroic effects in which the composer was less successful than in the songful lyrical qualities that are also found here. Grieg knew the piano and appreciated its technical capacity and accordingly he provided his soloist with some effective and showy sections. Despite the fact that most musicians profess to outgrow Grieg and writers on music generally patronize him, Grieg has his appeal to many listeners. It was of great interest to the present writer to hear a prominent pianist say recently that he had "discovered" Grieg's music only after playing before the public for twenty years. It appears that earlier in his career he had been dissuaded from playing Grieg.

This is the fourth recording of this concerto, and generally speaking reproductively the best. Rubenstein's performance further proves Mr. Kolodin's contention (made in connection with his performance of the Brahms piano music last month) that the artist is now at his best in music of reflection and intimacy. Grieg's mock heroics can be more saliently set forth — the opening here is not as forceful as it sometimes emerges in the concert hall — but the essence of the score does not lie in its heroic efforts. It is the songful characteristics of the music that count, and these are played with appropriate nuance and warmth. Technically Rubenstein realizes the composer's intentions without exaggerating them or conveying the impression that for the moment our admiration belongs with his execution rather than the music.

Curiously, this is not as imposing a recording as some of the previous concerto issues from the Philadelphia Orchestra. Although Ormandy's contribution to the performance is admirable for its straightforwardness and manly energy, there are many inner voices in the orchestra that do not come out here as they should. Take for example, the oboe passage in the second side of the recording, which follows in repetition of the piano line after the cascade of thirds. This and other woodwind passages are unnecessarily submerged, a fault that may or may not be due to

the recording. The piano is prominently featured at all times, and considering that its reproduction does justice to the pianist, this is all to the good; but one cannot help wishing that some of the inner voices of the orchestra had been bettered evidenced.

—P. H. R.

Chamber Music

SCHUBERT: Quintet in C major, Opus 163; played by the Budapest String Quartet with B. Heifetz (second cello). Columbia set M or MM-497, six discs, price \$6.50.

▲ Although this album was issued in May, the sponsors never got it to us until this past month. This work is the true companion, in the chamber music field, of Schubert's *C major Symphony* — the so-called symphony of heavenly length. The description fits both works ideally. No re-

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buke for careless craftsmanship can be hurled against this composition; it is not only one of Schubert's finest musical expressions, but one of the greatest chamber works of its kind ever written.

Despite the fact that intelligence and technical resourcefulness are apparent in this performance, its emotional qualities are by no means wholly persuasive. This brings us to the type of reproduction that the Budapest Quartet has obtained on Columbia records. True, it is more vital and tonally bigger, but, as countless readers have asked, is it characteristic of the Budapest's tonal qualities in performance? The hall in which the quartet now records definitely destroys that intimacy which prevailed in the recordings made by H.M.V. in London. The sound here often approaches chamber orchestra dimensions. But it is not sound which concerns us and which leaves us less satisfied with this set than we believed we would be; it is the lack of fine coloration in the playing, the failure to give more considerate attention to dynamics. In the opening movement, as well as elsewhere, we find practically no differentiation of tone between *piano* and *pianissimo*, and the latter marking is most important in the realization of the heartfelt qualities of Schubert's delectable melodies. I recall the observation of a leading English critic, who once said that very few artists indeed, when recording, are permitted to be quiet. Toscanini alone seems to have rebelled against undue monitoring of his *pianissimo* passages.

Technically the old performance by the London String Quartet and Horace Britt (second cello) was better than the later one by the Pro Arte Quartet and Anthony Pini. There were some poor spots in execution in the latter set; still, I preferred it to the other because of the subtler coloration, the refinement of the recording as well as the sensitive musicianship. What that discerning English critic, Alec Robertson, had to say about that performance in November, 1935, remains true today and deserves to be quoted here. "I feel so strongly about the beauty of the playing, about the whole performance, as to be filled with a sentiment of reverence

towards artists so at one, so sensitive in their interpretation of this great work. In the troubled times through which we are going one may discover in Schubert's music, so played, new hope and courage with which to face life and confirmed faith in the immortality of the human soul so greatly inspired." The last sentence can be emphasized at this time with new and added force.

I would not dismiss the new recording of the Budapest group entirely in the favor of the Pro Arte. There are values in the former which are not in the latter; thus, we find a greater fervor as well as greater technical resourcefulness. The Budapest group make us realize how "wonderful in its massive body of tone", as Dunhill has said, this work is. On the other hand, the Pro Arte group make us more conscious of the beauty and variety of the subject-matter. Perhaps some of us need "ear-reconditioning", and it may be that in time to come the new set will satisfy me as much as and even more than the other. However, in my estimation, the ideal performance of this work has not yet been accomplished for the phonograph. It is to be hoped that Columbia will in future recordings preserve more intimacy of tone characteristic of the Budapest Quartet's former recordings. The subtler qualities of chamber music demand it.

—P. H. R.

Keyboard

Carneval de Vienne on Themes by Johann Strauss (arr. Rosenthal); played by Moritz Rosenthal (piano). Victor disc 11-8175, price \$1.00.

▲ Moritz Rosenthal, now approaching his eightieth year, still makes appearances before the public. He has not, however, made any recordings in recent years; this one, and the others that Victor has in its catalogue, were made in England in 1936.

Long a favorite war-horse with Rosenthal audiences, this mélange is the sort of thing that one might expect of a pupil of Liszt. It has much of the character of an improvisation, and does little for the tunes it usurps. Rosenthal's extraordinary

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finger work is by no means consistently exemplified in this disc; there is some felicitous playing and some that is blurred and needlessly agitated. One has the feeling that the pianist was slightly nervous at the opening, but this is soon dispensed by some of his most charming playing in the first waltz and succeeding material. In the paraphrase of the waltz from *The Bat*, on side 2, the playing is not without effort and the blurred passages may be as much the fault of the recording as of the pianist.

—P. G.

Voice

KALMAN: (1) *Countess Maritza* — *Play Gypsy, Dance Gypsies*, and *Czardas*; (2) *Sari* — *Love's Old Sweet Song*; and LEHAR: *Paganini* — *Love Is Like a Breeze in May*; sung by James Melton (tenor) with Victor Symphony Orchestra, direction of Don Voorhees. Victor disc 11-8224, price \$1.00.

▲ Last year James Melton was featured with Don Voorhees and his orchestra on The Telephone Hour broadcast. The pattern here is the familiar one used in these radio programs, and undoubtedly these are the arrangements that were used on that radio show. Melton has made better records; here there is a suggestion of strain and uncertainty at times. Melton has a good lyric voice which does not stand up well when forced in an effort to make it bigger. No doubt his admirers will find this record satisfactory; the tenor's diction is admirable, and the recording is good.

—P. G.

KEEL: *Trade Winds*, and *Mother Carey* (disc 17328-D); WOLFE: *Short'nin Bread*, and ROBINSON: *Water Boy* (disc 17329-D); STOCK: *Route Marchin'*, and FELMAN: *Boots* (disc 17330-D); MOZART: *Nozze di Figaro* — *Se vuol ballare*, and *Non più andrai* (disc 17331-D); sung by Nelson Eddy with Orchestra under the direction of Robert Armbruster. Columbia 10-inch set M-507, price \$3.50.

▲ The first six songs show Eddy's ability to put over songs of obvious effects. The Mozart arias find him completely out of his element. Neither the spirit of the latter pieces nor the character of Figaro is conveyed. The baritone's voice in all the other songs has vitality and tonal variety, but in the Mozart airs it is strangely lifeless and unyielding.

The Keel songs are settings of Masefield poems; of the two, *Trade Winds* is the more successful, but both are songs that always appeal to men. Eddy is as gifted as anyone now before the public in character songs like Wolfe's *Short'nin Bread* and the Stock and Felman settings of two Kipling poems; he gets his effects without undue exaggeration.

One of the best things the baritone has done on records, to my way of thinking, is his singing of *Water Boy*. He projects this song with unusually fine dramatic feeling for him.

The orchestra, conducted by Armbruster, may not be a hindrance to the singer but it certainly isn't much of an asset. The recording does justice to the baritone's voice.

—P. G.

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WANTED: HMV Beethoven *Album* or separate *Sonatas* (Schnabel); *Bach—Goldberg Variations* (Landowska); Shubert *B flat Trio* (Casals, etc.); Beethoven *3rd Quartet*, Brahms *Third Quartet* (Budapest); Beethoven *Opus 96* (Fachiri and Tovey on NGS); and Capet Quartet records. State prices' condition, to P. Hart, 12606 SW Edgecliff, Portland, Oregon.

MASSENET: *Le Cid*—*Pleurez mes yeux; and Herodiade*—*Il est doux, il est bon;* sung by Suzanne Sten (mezzo soprano) with Columbia Opera Orchestra, direction of Erich Leinsdorf. Columbia disc 71368-D, price \$1.00.

▲ In the aria of Chimène from the third act of *Le Cid*, Miss Sten does some of her best singing on records. True, her voice is not entirely free from a suggestion of wobble, yet her performance is distinguished by the dark beauty of her tones and the dramatic thrust she brings to the climaxes. When Miss Sten holds her voice firmly with the breath, her singing is most persuasive and effective. The latter part of the aria is most tellingly accomplished. This is the air that Chimène sings when tormented by the belief that the Cid has been killed in battle. It is one of Massenet's most effective scenes for mezzo soprano.

In the more familiar aria from *Herodiade*, where Salomé tells of the goodness and kindness of John the Baptist, Miss Sten is less successful. Voicing the aria in a lower key than it was written in, she fails to bring sufficient tonal contrast to her singing. Comparing Miss Sten's performance with the one made by Ninon Vallin on Decca disc 27847-D, one finds the French soprano's treatment not only more expressive but stylistically better. The dramatic effects of this music are better conveyed by a soprano voice.

—P. G.

MENDELSSOHN: *On Wings Of Song*, Op. No. 2; and **FIRESTONE:** *If I Could Tell You*; sung by Richard Crooks (tenor) with Victor Symphony Orchestra, direction of Charles O'Connell. Victor set 11-8241, price \$1.00.

▲ The selection by Isabelle Firestone is the theme song of the Firestone radio program, which suggests that this disc was obviously made for Mr. Crooks' radio admirers. The Firestone song is plus-four sentiment and then some and the tenor renders it in the all-too familiar, lush manner of radio singers with an ascendancy in the end into falsetto.

The best part of the disc lies in Mr. Crooks' manly voicing of the familiar

Mendelssohn song. There is no aiming at effects here but a straight-forward performance, which is further enhanced by a clear enunciation of the text.

Mr. O'Connell and the orchestra provide smooth backgrounds for the singer, and the recording is good.

—P. G.

MEYERBEER: *Dinorah* — *Ombre légère (Shadow Song)*; sung in French by Lily Pons, with Victor Symphony Orchestra. Victor disc 11-8225, price \$1.00.

▲ The present recording offers a strange commentary upon an artist's attitude towards her responsibilities to her public. Apparently Miss Pons made this disc prior to signing a contract with the Columbia Company. The fact that it is released suggests that she sanctioned it and was satisfied with it. If this is the case, one wonders how and why she found it necessary to duplicate the selection in her recent album of operatic airs issued by Columbia. It may be that she regards Columbia recording as a better example of her singing, but if this is true we are not in agreement with her: Here, the acoustics of the room in which Miss Pons sang are far more flattering to her voice than are those in the Columbia disc; furthermore, her performance here is vocally smoother and stylistically more acceptable despite her curious and unorthodox voicing of the syllable "ah". Few, if any, of the great coloraturas of history were as careless about this syllable as Miss Pons.

—P. G.

ROSSINI: *La Danza* — *Tarantella Neapolitana*; and **WIENIAWSKI-KIEPURA:** *Kujawiak (A Polish Dance)*; sung by Jan Kiepura (tenor) with piano accompaniments. Columbia 10-inch disc 17332-D, price 75c.

▲ The Polish tenor Kiepura is heard to better advantage here than he was recently in the tenor arias from Puccini's *La Tosca*. He has the fervor and vocal flexibility requisite for both selections, although it cannot be said that he is consistent in his vocal production throughout. Caruso, in his recording of the Rossini song, conveyed more humor, but his sing-

ing of it will hardly be remembered by many today. Kiepura's voice recalls the great Italian tenor's in quality but not in execution.

Kujawiak is a mazurka, originally written for violin and piano. Kiepura has arranged it into an effective song, but the tenor takes more liberties with its rhythmic patterns than violinists do. This song would have been the more successful of the two had the tenor been more certain of his final high note.

The piano accompaniments of Otto Herz, in the Rossini air, and of Wolfgang Rebner in the Polish song, are efficient, and the recording is good.

—P. G.

HISTORY SPEAKS: Dewey At Manila;
enacted by Columbia Players. Columbia
10-inch disc 36619, price 50c.

▲ This disc, according to its sponsors, introduces a new series intended as dramatizations for children of great moments in American history. The recordings of this new series are dramatizations of the events portrayed in the canvases of Joseph Boggs Beale. This recording is accomplished in the familiar pattern and manner of a short radio drama with music and sound effects. Just how effective it will be with children we are not qualified to say; to our way of thinking neither the company of actors nor the script is particularly distinguished.

—P. G.

IN THE POPULAR VEIN

The Jimmy Cagney film, *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, based upon the life of George M. Cohan, appears to be the biggest hit of the season among the musicals and is being rapturously hailed by many critics as one of the finest musical films ever made. A batch of recordings from it would be more or less inevitable, and Victor and Columbia come out with simultaneous releases of albums from the picture. Of the two, the Victor is the more meritorious. Bearing the same title as the film, *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, (P.125), it presents the great Cohan hit tunes which make up the score of the picture in arrangements similar to those in the picture, with one Brad Reynolds doing a very passable imitation of either Cagney or Cohan (or both) in most of them. The Columbia set, entitled *Songs of George M. Cohan* (C-89) presents virtually the same tunes as the Victor in recordings by Mordy Bauman, a baritone who has had a highly varied career on discs under the name of Mordecai Bauman. To the best of my knowledge, however, this represents his first attempt at popular songs, and the records sound like it. They are more definitely on the corny side, not amusingly so, like Beatrice Kay's *Gay Nineties* albums, but merely annoyingly so. . . . Columbia give us more Marek Weber magic in *Continental Tan-*

gos

 (C-90). "Every tango in the set justly merit the term "hackneyed" but when you hear Weber play them, it's like hearing them for the first time. Such warhorses as *La Cumparsita*, *Jalousie*, *A Media Luz*, *Caminito*, *Tango delle Rose*, even poor old *La Paloma*, take on an unbelievable amount of lustre when Weber gives them a once over lightly with his well-known "treatment". . . . It has always been the contention of your correspondent that the highly-touted Hazel Scott was a somewhat less than remarkable pianist who owed the bulk of her success to the fact that most people find the process of starting out to play a classic straight and then turning into a swing arrangement of it a highly original and witty procedure. Also to the fact that she is the possessor of considerable personal allure. But it is unpleasant to have one's suspicions as to her pianistic mediocrity confirmed as definitely as they are in her second album of piano solos (Decca Set 321). Here, in a group of non-classic swing recordings, she reveals herself as a very average sort of keyboard artist, one not to be mentioned in the same breath with such people as Art Tatum, Teddy Wilson and a host of others. About the most you can say for her is that she's O.K., as female pianists go. . . . A Raymond Scott record is always

worth listening to. He may not — in his original compositions — invariably reach the high standard of several of his early efforts, but he's never ordinary. *Secret Agent* and *Pan-American Hot Spot* (Decca 18377) are both typical Scott concoctions, humorous, light-fingered and really effective. The band plays them with the same degree of virtuosity that he used to achieve with his quintet. . . David Rose, California orchestra leader possibly best known for his habit of marrying movie stars (Martha Raye and Judy Garland, so far, and he's still a young fellow), is also a conductor and arranger whose ideas about things correspond, roughly, to those of Kostelanetz. His band is somewhat smaller, I believe, but he employs the same type of over-ripe orchestration if with hardly the same effect. After a quite promising record debut last month, his contribution this time is much more undistinguished. *Dance of the Spanish Onion* is a sort of *jota* that completely falls to pieces in the middle, while his version of the rumba *Poinciana* (Victor 27888) is chiefly notable for the brilliant studio job the West Coast engineers did on Rose's strings. The string tone is as brilliantly realistic here as in anything I've ever heard. . . In *The Wang Wang Blues*, the Benny Goodman Sextet revives the tune that Paul Whitman rode to his first enormous success twenty-two years ago (Gosh, how time flies), and thereby gives his brilliant young virtuosi another chance to do their stuff, with Lou McGarity a powerhouse on trombone as usual and the others their usual resplendent selves. *The Way You Look Tonight* (Columbia 36594) on the reverse is mostly Peggy Lee's vocal, which is not this man's dish. . . Harry James' heart-wrenching version of *You Made Me Love You* is going to have a lot to answer for, it seems like. For here comes Charlie Spivak with an arrangement of Massenet's *Elegie* that features the kind of trumpet playing that we all hoped went out with the white-gloved silver cornetists of another generation. And it was a tradition that stayed buried until James revived it. *Brother Bill*, on the other side, (Columbia 36596) partially atones for this sentimental orgy

with a rambunctious number which seems to have been written by Louis Armstrong. . . Looks like the rage for the next few weeks or so is going to be *Jingle Jangle Jingle*, a sort of cowboy number which has been arranged in a manner that gives it a kind of spurious distinction which will appeal to people until the novelty wears off. This arrangement has a secondary voice following the lead two measures later, canon fashion, and the effect is rather cute. The Merry Macs do it up brown (Decca 18361) with a colorless *Cheatin' On The Sandman* on the reverse. . . Freddy Martin's *Jingle, Jangle, Jingle* (Victor 27909) is well done but on the monotonous side—it takes two singers to make this number right. *I Met Her on Monday* is a cute song on the reverse face, but somebody should confide what pitch is to Eddie Stine, the vocalist. . . If there's a better male vocalist in the country (aside from the fabulous Bing, who's in a class by himself, of course) than Woody Herman, we'd like to know about it. The very appealing quality of his voice is the least of it. It's his phrasing, his impeccable enunciation, and, in the case of blues and first class torch numbers, the very real emotion underlying his work that put him on the top shelf. *Deliver Me to Tennessee* (Decca 18346), is one of his best, a genuinely fine tune that Herman sings as though he meant it. *Amen*, on the other side, is a terrific slow rhythm number that packs an awful wallop, with Herman's vocal again a tremendously potent feature. . . Don't be surprised if Claude Thornhill steps into the No. 1 spot monopolized for so long by Dorsey and Miller one of these days. His has become a versatile, well-rounded "commercial" band in the best sense of the word in the past few months. He plays any kind of music and plays it as well as if not better than most anyone else. One of his most popular recent arrangements is the old Arthur Schwartz tune, *Something To Remember You By* (Columbia 36578). He has a vocal group that really knows its stuff, and that seems to be one of the essentials of a top flight band these days. They do a very smooth job on this one. . . — Van Norman.

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